



North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation  
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Michael F. Easley  
 Governor

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William G. Ross Jr.  
 Secretary, DENR

## EDUCATION CERTIFICATION FOR 60

Sixty staff members of the state parks system were honored by the state in a Nov. 17 ceremony in Durham for earning environmental education certification.

The park rangers and superintendents were the largest group by far among the 257 people who earned the certification. More than 95 percent of park rangers and superintendents in North Carolina hold the certification, and the remainder are enrolled in the program of the state Office of Environmental Education.

The honorees were acknowledged by Lieutenant Governor Beverly Perdue, Bill Ross, secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and guest speaker Richard Louv, author of the nonfiction book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder*.

"A central part of our mission in the state parks system is to share knowledge about the natural resources we're charged with

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 9*



*Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue speaks at education event.*

## PARKS IN PLACE TO LEAD CONSERVATION



*Park superintendents and division administrators gathered at The Summit during the parks system's 90th year.*

Bill Ross, secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, congratulated the state parks superintendents on the system's 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year and said state parks are well positioned to take a leadership role in state conservation efforts.

"One of the ways I see of celebrating is thanking you all for the power of partnership, the power of innovation and the power of leadership," Ross told park superintendents during their 56<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in November at The Summit Environmental Education Center.

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 6*

**Department of Environment and Natural Resources**

# ARMSTRONG NEW DIRECTOR OF RRS

Pete Armstrong, long-time director of the Rocky Mount Parks and Recreation Department, has been named director of Recreation Resources Service (RRS) effective Feb. 15.

Recreation Resources Service is a technical assistance program offered through a cooperative partnership between the Division of Parks and Recreation and the N.C. State University Department of

Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management.

Through five regional offices, RRS consultants help administer the grant programs for local governments of the state's Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The consultants advise local governments on the grant application process and grant

project management.

RRS supports local government parks and recreation programs through conceptual park planning, playground safety training, citizen advisory board services and continuing education opportunities. The program also conducts special studies for government agencies and communities.

"Pete brings with him a wealth of experience in marketing, partnership development and planning, said Lewis Ledford, director of the division. "The state and local governments will share the benefits of that experience and innovative thinking as we work to strengthen and expand the already outstanding services provided by RRS.

"We are very grateful for the help of Dr. Phil Rea and Dr. Candace Vick in directing RRS in the past months while the search for a permanent director was ongoing."

Armstrong is a graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill and joined the Rocky Mount Parks and Recreation Department in 1978 as a community center supervisor. Under his leadership, the department expanded to eight divisions, added four parks and increased parkland to more than 520 acres.

The city's innovative facilities include the Rocky Mount Sports Complex, the three-mile Tar River Trail, the restored Stith-Talbert and Sunset parks and the Imperial Center for the Arts and Sciences.

Armstrong is a member of the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Association and the National Parks and Recreation Association.

## From The Director's Desk

The turning of a new year usually sets a mind to contemplating what's been accomplished and what remains to be done.

It is by no means a complete accounting, but this edition of *The Steward* describes 2006 accomplishments we can consider with pride. Sixty of our staff members were honored for earning environmental education certification. That was the largest group represented at the state's ceremony in December. All of the hard work by our rangers and staff speaks to our commitment to educating state park visitors. News about the REI grant projects coming along reflects our commitment to partnerships as well.

And, completion of the master plan at Lake James State Park is just one example of our progress in establishing new park areas and new facilities. In fact, allocations from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund were directed to facilities and land acquisition at 14 state parks and three state natural areas – revealing we have much on our plate in coming months.

We completed our 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year with some notable successes, but what of the future?

At our superintendents conference, Bill Ross and Richard Rogers, secretary and assistant secretary respectively of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, said the division, because of its careful planning and professionalism, is well positioned to take a key leadership role in the state's conservation efforts. That's something I've felt all along, and it was nice to hear.

That confidence in our abilities is another thing to consider with pride as we look ahead.

Sincerely,



Lewis Ledford

# TRUST FUND BENEFITS 17 PARK UNITS

Revenue from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund was directed to 14 state parks and three state natural areas in October, either for land acquisition or capital improvement projects.

The N.C. Parks and Recreation Authority considered the recommended projects offered by the state parks system staff at a meeting at Medoc Mountain State Park. The authority traditionally uses its fall quarterly meeting to allocate the 65 percent of the trust fund set aside for park system improvements.

The trust fund is supported by the state's tax on real estate sales.

The authority also heard an update on land conservation bond efforts from Kate Dixon of the Land for Tomorrow Coalition. That coalition of conservation groups tried unsuccessfully last winter to gain legislative approval for a \$1 billion land conservation bond referendum.

The issue was referred to a legislative study commission. The co-chair of that commission, Rep. Lucy Allen of Louisburg, also discussed that process with the authority. Both said that current state indebtedness and administration support will figure prominently in the legislature's view of any referendum.

The authority approved capital improvement projects projected to cost \$16.95 million for six state parks. This includes \$2.7 million set aside for major maintenance, trail maintenance, exhibit maintenance and construction reserve.

The remainder was allocated to these projects:

- Cliffs of the Neuse,



*Rep. Lucy Allen, co-chair of a legislative study commission, talks to authority members about a potential bond vote.*

\$500,000 for design of a visitor center and east district office. The park's staff is currently using a 600-square-foot office built in the 1950s.

- Carolina Beach, \$200,000 for marina channel dredging and facility improvements including 10-14 new boat slips.

- Fort Macon, \$2.2 million for a Coastal Education Center and exhibits. This is a second-stage allocation to this project, which has a total projected cost of \$8.2 million.

- Gorges, \$4.7 million for initial facility development to include roads and infrastructure. This is a second-stage allocation to this project, which has a total projected cost of \$7.3 million.

- Haw River, \$500,000 for repairs and renovations to The Summit environmental education center.

- Lake James, \$5.1 million for the initial phase of development on a 2.915-acre property acquired from Crescent Resources Inc. in 2004. It

will include an entrance road, parking areas, bathhouse, swim beach and picnic areas.

- Stone Mountain, \$836,053 for expansion of group camping facilities.

The authority set aside \$14.4 million for land acquisition projects at seven state parks and three state natural areas.

The state parks are at Crowders Mountain, Eno River, Hickory Nut Gorge, Lake Norman, Medoc Mountain, Mount Mitchell, New River, Pettigrew, South Mountains and Stone Mountain. The state natural areas are at Elk Knob, Lower Haw River and Oconeechee Mountain.

The allocations included \$1 million earmarked for tracts to be added in both Ashe and Watauga counties at Elk Knob State Natural Area. Tracts in Watauga County would help protect headwaters of the North Fork, New River. A proposed addition in Ashe County includes important natural com-

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 5*



# LAKE JAMES MASTER PLAN UNVEILED

The state parks system has adopted a sweeping master plan for 2,915 acres added to Lake James State Park that calls for an array of camping options, vacation cabins, a visitor center, community building, fishing and boating opportunities and an extensive network of hiking and biking trails.

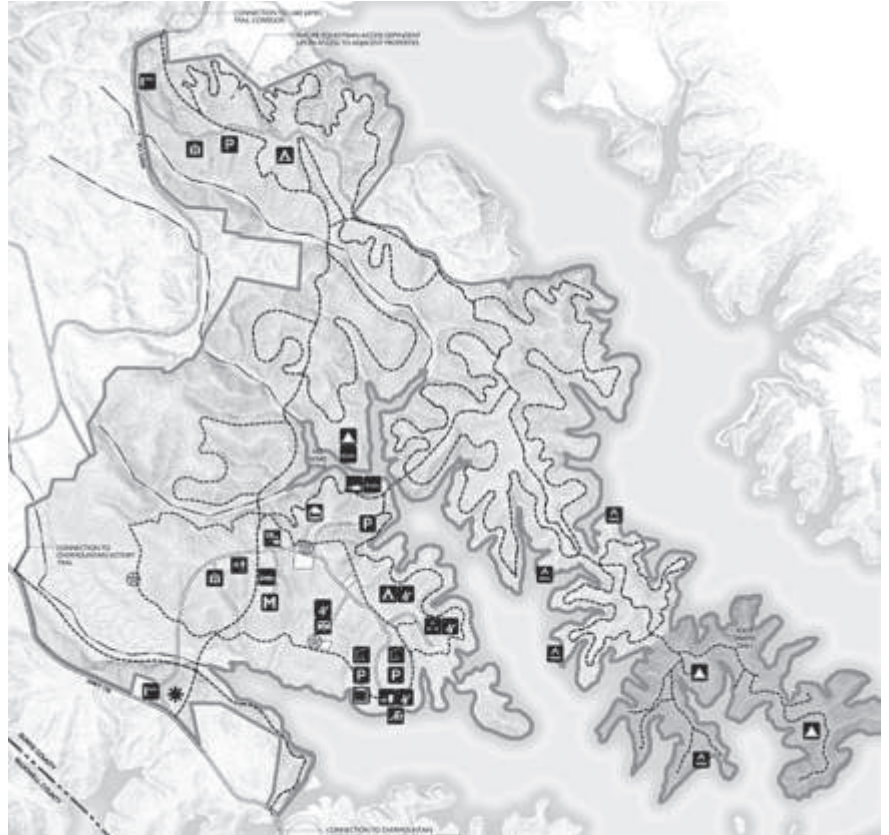
The N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority allocated \$5.1 million Oct. 19 to complete funding for the first phase of park development to include a bathhouse and 700-foot-long swim beach, picnic grounds and infrastructure on the property acquired from Crescent Resources Inc. in 2004.

That acquisition expanded the park to six times its former size and allowed the conservation of more than 24 miles of shoreline on the 6,500-acre lake in Burke and McDowell counties.

"When the state parks system and its partners first considered acquiring this property from Crescent Resources, we saw the potential for creating a world class state park at Lake James, and we now begin the realization of that vision," said Lewis Ledford, director of the division. "This master plan gives us a thoughtful and realistic blueprint for success, and the support of the General Assembly and the trust fund gives us the means."

The total cost of the first development phase is estimated at \$7.6 million. The authority had earlier set aside \$2.5 million for design and initial construction using certificates of deposit backed by trust fund revenues.

Construction is expect-



*The master plan places the majority of facilities on the Paddy Creek peninsula in the southwest area of the property.*

ed to begin in mid-2007.

The process of rewriting the master plan for Lake James State Park began in early 2005 through a contract with Land-Design of Charlotte. It included public meetings and a lengthy public comment period.

The long-term master plans for state parks guide facility development and land acquisition.

For planning purposes, the property on Lake James' north shore is divided into three sections: the Paddy Creek peninsula to the southwest; a center parcel of watershed area; and the Long Arm peninsula, a steep and heavily wooded ridge that overlooks the Linville Gorge area to the northeast.

Most park facilities will be located on the 1,000-acre Paddy Creek peninsula, which

offers the largest concentration of developable land. The main entrance to those facilities will be from NC 126 north of Nebo in Burke County.

A two-mile, paved entrance road will lead to a facilities complex that will ultimately include a visitor center, community building, swim beach area, maintenance compound, picnic grounds, boating and fishing access and separate campgrounds for RV's and trailers, for tent camping and for group camping.

The master plan also calls for primitive "hike-in" campsites as well as "boat-in" campsites on Long Arm.

In addition, the plan calls for 14 vacation cabins near the center of the facilities complex. These will be similar to

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 5*

# LAKE JAMES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

cabins at Morrow Mountain and Hanging Rock state parks.

A second entrance from NC 126 onto the 1,300-acre Long Arm peninsula will lead to trail-head parking as well as a tent-only campground, "hike-in" campsites and a network of multi-use trails for hiking and biking.

This entrance will also provide access to Crescent Resources property that is considered a future site for a commercial lodge and conference center. An 80-acre parcel at the tip of Long Arm peninsula will be reserved for hiking and primitive camping.

Despite the size of the former Crescent Resources property, facility development will be limited to a relatively small area. About 1,300 acres must be reserved for riparian buffer to protect water quality, and some of the remaining acreage has wooded slopes of 15 percent or more.

"As at all state parks, we must balance recreational opportunities with responsible stewardship of the land. LandDesign and state parks planners have gone to great lengths to plan for responsible development that won't harm the



*First development phase includes swim beach. resource in any way," Ledford said.*

As development progresses, the state park's management center will shift from the current park offices to the north shore property. The park, dedicated in 1987, has 690 acres on the lake's south shore.

## TRUST FUND

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

munities on The Peak.

At Medoc Mountain State Park, a \$1.1 million allocation will be directed toward adding 1,507 acres of property formerly owned by International Paper Corp. and currently being held by The Nature Conservancy.

The project also has a \$744,000 allocation from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund.

The authority directed \$700,000 to Crowders Mountain State Park where property is being appraised near the northeast section of the park. The property had been slated for development and its acquisition would protect the views-hed from the mountain.

The largest single allocation for land was \$7 million set aside for the newly



*Members of the Parks and Recreation Authority visit a display on the Air Awareness Trail at Medoc Mountain.*

authorized Hickory Nut Gorge State Park where negotiations are under way for tracts in the World's Edge and Rumbling Bald areas.

The authority also approved \$150,000 in funding

for two natural resource studies – an archaeological survey of newly acquired property at Lake James State Park, and a study of trout management practices on Bullhead Creek at Stone Mountain State Park.



# SUPERINTENDENTS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"When I think of teams working together in the department, it's your division that pops to mind," Ross said.

Ross added that the parks system has a tremendous challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when it's more difficult than ever for people in an increasingly urbanized state to connect with nature.

To fully contribute to conservation efforts, state parks leaders "have got to be thinking outside the fence lines," Ross said. "It will take all of you rising to your potential as leaders."

Ross said that the system's New Parks for a New Century initiative has been an effective way for the system to set its priorities, and it's a planning tool that can attract support and funding.

New Parks for a New Century, begun in 2001, examined all known sites of high natural resource value and recreation potential in the state and began scoring each using set criteria. The result was a list of 47 sites that are being examined as potential state parks or state natural areas.

Four new state parks and several state natural areas from that list have been authorized by the General Assembly.

At another point during the three-day conference, Richard Rogers, assistant secretary for natural resources, also applauded the initiative.

With the state losing about 350 acres a day to development, New Parks for a New Century makes a good argument for more conservation funding, Rogers said, and it should be promoted more widely and integrated with the state's overall conservation plans.

Lewis Ledford, in a "State of the State



*Assistant Secretary Richard Rogers applauded the division's new parks initiative.*



*Bill Ross, secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, addresses the state park superintendents.*

Parks" message to superintendents, also noted a high level of public support as the system faces tougher challenges.

The support has been evident during ongoing negotiations on the purchase of Chimney Rock Park from a family corporation to add to the developing Hickory Nut Gorge State Park in Rutherford County, Ledford said.

Public letters and editorials have expressed confidence in the parks system's ability to protect and manage that natural landmark, and the General Assembly expressed its confidence with a \$15 million direct appropriation for the park, he noted.

"We're so recognized for what we're doing, but we could market ourselves even more effectively," Ledford said.

The state parks system enters its 91<sup>st</sup> year managing more than \$99 million, including the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and its local grant programs, appropriations and federal grant programs. And, park operating budgets have increased about 500 percent in the past 20 years.

"We're managing major money and we need and intend to manage it effectively and efficiently. We must be accountable," he said.

Don Reuter, assistant director for administration and planning, said that the administrative staff has not kept up with the growth in responsibilities, and that the division will address

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



**PARSONS**



**WALTZ**



**McBEAN**



**WATKINS**

## ***FOUR RANGERS CITED FOR HEROISM***

Heroism Awards were presented to Rangers Derek Parsons, Cheryl Waltz and Fred Watkins and Superintendent Sue McBean by the Division of Parks and Recreation during the annual superintendent's conference in November. All four related to incidents of life-threatening nature.

Below are excerpts from letters of commendation from Division Director Lewis Ledford that accompanied the awards.

### **Derek Parsons**

*After completing an annual CPR class at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area, you visited a local Home Depot store, where you encountered a group standing around a woman who lay unconscious on the floor. You immediately responded by performing CPR on the individual until emergency medical services arrived. Had it not been for your quick response, heroic actions and professionally rendered treatment, the victim could well have suffered severe brain damage or possibly death.*

*Your outstanding effort, professionalism and emergency response skills have earned you the honor and respect of the division and staff, and we are pleased to recognize your heroic actions with this award.*

### **Cheryl Waltz**

*On behalf of the entire N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation, I am honored and privileged to present to you our agency's heroism award for your quick action, determination and*

## **SUPERINTENDENTS**

*CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6*

that issue.

New positions being sought include a database-IT developer who can help with in-house budget databases along with an exhibits curator who can oversee exhibits design and direct an effort to complete more exhibit tasks in-house.

*intuitive use of your law enforcement training to avert a possible tragedy while serving at Mount Mitchell State Park.*

*When a visitor entered the park office acting suspiciously, you responded by engaging her in conversation and walking with her back to her vehicle. It became apparent that the individual had been consuming alcohol, and upon noticing a revolver located on the car seat beside her, you took immediate action to ensure the safety of the individual as well as others. It was later determined when the woman was taken to the hospital, that she had planned to end her life that day.*

### **Fred Watkins, Sue McBean**

*On behalf of the entire N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation, I am honored and privileged to present to you our agency's heroism award for your quick action, determination and effort in attempting life-saving emergency medical response on a fellow employee at Jordan Lake State Recreation on April 15, 2005.*

*Although seasonal employee Frank King, who collapsed from a massive heart attack, did not survive, your professional conduct and commitment to doing everything possible to save his life are truly commendable and deserving of this important recognition.*

*Your co-workers, who nominated you for this award, stressed that despite the ultimate outcome of these particularly unfortunate incidents, the effort, whether successful or not, represent the same level of dedication, determination and professionalism. They correctly pointed out that staff members are often only praised when victims are successfully resuscitated. Doctors later informed the park staff that Mr. King died immediately from the heart attack. That fact does not change or in any way diminish the outstanding way you responded on April 15, 2005.*

# PARK ADMINISTRATION GROWS COMPLEX

If anyone needs convincing that things have gotten much more complicated in state park offices, they should consider the workshops offered at an Administrative Staff Seminar held in October for park office assistants.

Some of those weighty topics were accounting, e-procurement, management of full-time and seasonal payrolls, law enforcement reporting and navigation of a new online budget database. The agenda was also seasoned with desktop publishing, Powerpoint presentation, digital photo management and park promotion.

Although they're called "office assistants" for state personnel purposes, the parks system's core administrative staff members are essentially office managers with a wide-ranging and complex list of responsibilities.

Their jobs have grown just as dramatically as their parks and the state parks system in recent years.

"You gave us the efficiency to start to manage our parks on a professional level," Phil McKnelly, retired division director, told the group in a keynote speech at the three-day seminar. "There are still some folks who think anyone can do what you do. The biggest difference is that you care, and that's demonstrated every day."

He said that office staff are expected to do it all with a smile for park visitors who enter their office doors in a constant stream.

"When someone comes into a visitor center, you're the first one they see. You are the one that can really set the tone of their visit to our parks," McKnelly said.

McKnelly said that when he joined the parks system's administration in 1987, there were fulltime office assistants at only three parks and part-time assistants at five parks. The parks system sought and won legislative approval to hire office staff at each park, and it's a good thing, he said.

Since that time, operating budgets for state parks have increased 500 percent. The total state parks system budget - including appropriations, trust fund grants and federal programs - has grown by about 10 times to more than \$99 million.

A significant amount of that spending filters through park offices, and all of that work has been complicated by new accounting procedures, new personnel procedures and broad use of the internet for nearly all government work.



*The seminar gathered office assistants for three days of training.*

Lewis Ledford, the current division director, said, "You're the ones on the front line. You're the ones responding. If the parks are like a vehicle, you are the fuel. Without you, it's like someone's put water in the tank."

In recent months, Ledford challenged the office assistants to rejuvenate the Administrative Staff Council, which is dedicated to enhancing the profession through education, training, communication and partnerships.

One of the council's first tasks was to organize the seminar at The Summit environmental education center at Haw River State Park. Council officers are chairman Pam Dillard, vice chairman Kelly Chandler and secretary-treasurer Corliss Baskerville.

The seminar was designed to share ideas and offer instruction, particularly to newer office assistants. It also served to introduce some of the staff to facets of the state parks system such as natural resource management and publications.

The seminar also offered a chance to share some recognition for awards and dedicated service.

Tony Bass was presented the division's special achievement award for his work in designing a comprehensive database for capital spending as well as other park budgeting tools.

Vanessa Truman of Merchants Millpond State Park was presented a special achievement award for helping with the startup and hiring at Dismal Swamp State Natural Area.

Corliss Baskerville of Kerr Lake State Natural Area was presented a distinguished service award for maintaining and upgrading the park's computer system and her training efforts.

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 9*



# ADMINISTRATION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Betty Anderson of William B. Umstead State Park was presented a distinguished service award for developing new office procedures and manuals, presenting interpretive programs and contributing photographs to the park's natural resource database.

In addition, Libba Watson of Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve was given special recognition for 30 years of service at that park. Other service recognitions were: 20 years, Cleta Buck at Fort Macon and Robin Lynch-Bennett at Pilot Mountain; 15 years, Pam Laurence at New River and Karen Ake at Morrow Mountain; 10 years, Bonita Meeks at Cliffs of the Neuse.



*Libba Watson of Weymouth Woods was honored for 30 years of service at that park.*

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

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protecting," said Lewis Ledford, director of the division. "Certification in environmental education reflects the professionalism with which our rangers approach that aspect of their job."

"It's proper that the hard work involved in this achievement is recognized and appreciated by the state parks system and the state's citizens," he said.

Certification demands more than 200 hours of training, including attendance at seven workshops of 10 hours each (many of them held at state parks and attended by educators from schools and from other state agencies). Also required are some 110 hours of related training and study, and a 20-hour action partnership.

The partnership project calls for a candidate to work with volunteers to directly improve the environment and educate the community about it. Projects have included such things as nature trails, wildlife observation platforms, native plant gardens and recycling centers.

In 1999, soon after the Office of Environmental Education established the certification criteria, Ledford, then a district

superintendent, proposed that certification be a job requirement. A division staff directive by former director Phil McKnelly enrolled all rangers and superintendents.

Both felt that stressing this type of professional development would signal the division's commitment to environmental education in the parks.

On the ground, the intense training for rangers and superintendents leads to better interpretive programs, better exhibits and a more meaningful educational experience for all park visitors.

Aside from other duties, park rangers regularly prepare interpretive programs for visitors, including school students and even other educators. They're also often involved in preparing displays, trailside exhibits and multi-media programs and planning for exhibits in visitor centers.

Park rangers also prepare and conduct the division's Environmental Education Learning Experiences, or EELE's, for school groups and teachers. These highly structured programs incorporate lessons learned in the parks into the state's school curriculums.

The division personnel who received the certification are listed below.

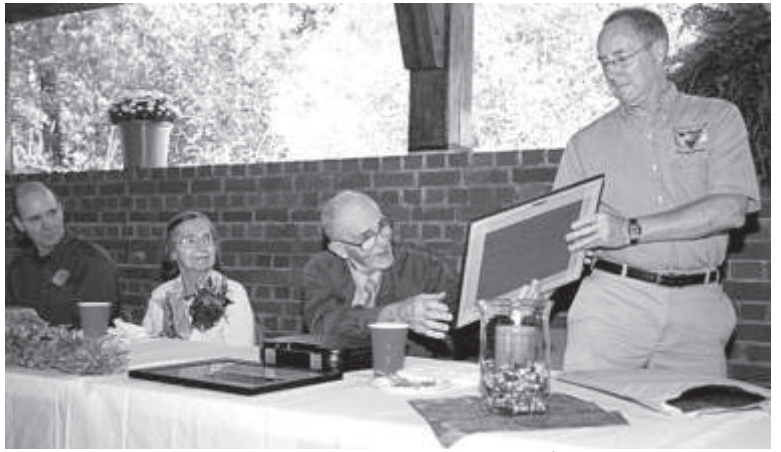
Paul Kalish, Jeffrey Jones, Tim Johnson, Katharine Womble, Greg Schneider, Andrew Fairbanks, Jody Kelly, Lynette Hicks, George Lassiter, Lewis Ledford, Christopher Sicard, James Sessoms, Mark Pritchard, David Mumford, Lucy Bruce, Joseph Martin, Janet Pearson, Jeffery Matheson, Austin Paul, Tim McCree.

Jeffrey Owen, Jason Gwinn, Erik Nygard, John Speed, Shederick Mole, Glen George, James Ledgerwood, Andrew Chilton, Clay Veasey, Harry Edwards, Brandy Belville, Mary Berrier, Andy Whitaker, Dave Cook, Trudy Whitney, Jeffrey Turner, Signa Williams, Fred Watkins, Kelly Hoover, Katharine Scala.

Philip King, Victor Burgess, Neill Lee, Andrew Buchanan, Douglas Blatney, Susan Ashley, Scott Coffman, John Metz, Janet Braddy, Christopher Day, Tom Jackson, Robert Davies, Walter Summerlin, Marcus Crossman, William Cox, Richard Crocker, Debo Cox, Garrett German, Jennifer Thoburn, Susan Tillotson.

*Dan Smith, right, retiring superintendent at Cliffs of the Neuse State Park, shares momentos with his family.*

# DAN SMITH



## CLIFFS OF NEUSE CHIEF RETIRES AT 26 YEARS

After 26 years with the Division of Parks and Recreation, including almost 10 years as superintendent of Cliffs of the Neuse State Park, Dan Smith retired Nov. 1 amid congratulations and best wishes from his colleagues.

Smith was honored at a retirement luncheon in the park on Oct. 30.

"This park is a better place because of people like Dan Smith. And, this parks system is a better system because of people like him," remarked Cliff Phillips, a retired east district superintendent and Smith's former supervisor.

Smith began working at Cliffs of the Neuse, one of the state's oldest parks, in the late 1970s as a park attendant and in 1980, Phillips chose him to run a youth work program. Later that year, he was hired as a ranger at Raven Rock State Park.

In 1991, he was named the superintendent at Medoc Mountain State Park in Halifax County, and in 1997, he returned to Wayne County as superintendent at Cliffs of the Neuse.

Lewis Ledford, division director, told him, "Truly Dan, you are one of the good guys and one who's going to be missed."

Ledford and Adrian O'Neal, the current east district superintendent, both likened Smith to one of the steadfast pillars that have helped to hold the state parks system together through a period of tremendous growth and change.

Susan Tillotson, the chief of operations, said Smith's reputation in the parks system is one of solid strength, reliability and dependability.

"He was the kind of superintendent you're kind of glad to have at the park when something goes wrong," Tillotson said. "Dan always wore the green and gray with pride, and always looked and acted professionally."

Smith told the group of more than 60 of his former coworkers that he very nearly accepted a job in manufacturing in 1980 instead of pursuing a career as a park ranger, "but there wasn't a window in the place," he said, and he couldn't face the prospect of a career indoors.

"This earth we live on is mighty small, but the jobs we do are important. We all just do our small part that needs to be done," Smith said. "I appreciate all this. It's been fun. Continue the good work."



*Above, Smith visits with Cliff Phillips, left, former east district superintendent and Jud Burns, right, south district superintendent. At right, the park's staff gathers to wish him the best.*







*Above, Ranger Brian Hahn directs a work crew from REI. At right, volunteers install amphitheater benches.*



## REI HELPS FALLS LAKE BUILD FACILITY

Falls Lake State Recreation Area has a new amphitheater at its Beaverdam recreation site thanks to a \$10,000 grant from Recreation Equipment Inc. (REI) and plenty of sweat equity from a dozen of its employees on a blustery November Saturday.

The volunteers installed benches, a small stage and a fire ring on a bluff overlooking the lake. The stage framing was erected earlier by volunteer Brian Saylor and his son Michael.

The REI grant will also supply fire rings at newly developed group campsites at the Shinleaf recreation site and will augment some Eagle Scout projects at the park.

"Stewardship is a big part of what we do, so this is something we've kind of looked forward to," said Jacob Dolan, a supervisor at the company's new Raleigh Store.

Dolan said that new employees get paid for their first day of work at a park as an incentive for continued volunteerism. "Some of our folks have already signed up for the next work day, so

that's looking pretty good," he said.

In February, Seattle-based REI announced 100 grants to parks as a way to get employees involved in stewardship.

Grant recipients were selected after REI employees identified community parks that were of particular interest to their customers, offered outdoor recreation opportunities, and were in close proximity to an REI store. Once specific parks were selected, REI worked with park officials to identify a nonprofit group that provides volunteer care for each park.

Each of four REI stores in North Carolina chose a nearby state park as recipients – Falls Lake, Eno River, William B. Umstead and Crowders Mountain. The funds were channeled through the Friends of State Parks and the Eno River Association.

At Eno River, the grant will be used to equip five backcountry campsites. And at William B. Umstead State Park, the 13-site Crabtree picnic area in the park's Reedy Creek section will be renovated.

## CROWDERS MOUNTAIN PRAIRIE TAKES SHAPE

At Crowders Mountain State Park, a \$10,000 stewardship grant from REI is being used to create a two-acre prairie ecosystem of the type found in the piedmont prior to settlement.

With the help of REI volunteers, the site outside the visitor center was cleared of small pines, burned and seeded with native grasses under the tutelage of Dr. Larry Barden of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, an expert in piedmont prairies.

Altering the site also created an attractive vista toward Kings Pinnacle from the visitor center.

Some remaining funds will be used for interpretive displays about piedmont prairies and for native wildflower seed.



*REI volunteers turn out for prairie project.*



# MOUNT JEFFERSON MARKS 50 YEARS

By Thomas Randolph, Ranger  
Mt. Jefferson SNA

On October 13, 1956, the State of North Carolina welcomed Mount Jefferson into the protected fold of public lands as a state park. The mountain in Ashe County overlooks the growing towns of Jefferson and West Jefferson.

Like an old friend, the mountain forest thrives high above as an example of what people can protect, if they decide that it is important enough to do so.

On Saturday, Oct. 14, Mount Jefferson – now a state natural area managed in conjunction with New River State Park – welcomed nearly 350 people to commemorate the park's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

In a picnic shelter about 4,500 feet above sea level, the celebrants shared stories, food and some 15 pots of warm coffee.

## POEM WINS FOR SIXTH GRADER

As part of its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, Mt Jefferson State Natural Area held a poetry contest for students from three area elementary schools. From among 88 entries, the winner was this poem authored by sixth-grader Lucas Zeller.

### *On the Green, Green Mountain*

*Go to Mt. Jefferson to listen to the sound.  
Of birds as they sing  
As they take to the wing on the green, green  
mountain.  
Go to Mt. Jefferson to smell the sweetest  
smells  
Of bright, fresh flowers  
After spring showers, on the green, green  
mountain.  
To feel something amazing feel the lives of  
trees from their roots to leaves  
On the green, green mountain.  
Go to Mt. Jefferson to see wonderful things  
See the green and brown of the trees in the  
ground  
On the green mountain.  
Go to Mt Jefferson  
To experience true nature the birds and trees  
the flowers and bees  
On the green, green mountain.*

Mount Jefferson has always been special to mountain residents as the setting for tales of Native Americans, ghosts, panther sightings, landslides and even unconfirmed reports as a wayside stop on the Underground Railroad.

Even into the early 1900s, the only way to reach the summit was on foot along trails that were difficult and steep.

During the Great Depression in the 1930s, community leaders sought to have the Works Progress Administration build a road to the top. But the WPA refused to build a public project on private lands. That prompted a donation of 26 acres at the summit to make a small park.

The steep road was built by hand labor and it spurred community leaders to begin a grassroots effort to add Mount Jefferson to the list of North Carolina state parks. It seemed like a great idea, but there were other problems to be solved, the first being a legislative hurdle that declared a state park must be a minimum of 400 acres.

Fred N. Colvard, a leading citizen, was one of the first to step forward with a donation of 66.20 acres. Others followed: Wade E. Vannoy, 35 acres; John Hudson, Barbara O and Charles C. Burns 11.75 acres; Ashe Hospital, 10.40 acres; the Town of West Jefferson, 131 acres; G.W. Taylor, 5.8 acres.

Other citizens and local companies also donated funds in order to buy more land.

While interviewing a local resident about the park's history, I asked why the people worked so hard to make this mountain into a park. The reply was, "We were just so proud of the mountain."

In 1956, the local Skyland Post and the Our State magazine began telling the story of North Carolina's newest state park with just a tad over 400 acres.

Besides its place in history, Mount Jefferson is also an important natural resource, part of a chain of amphibolite mountains that arcs through Watauga and Ashe counties. Much of the amphibolite corridor is coming into conservation ownership with the help of The Nature Conservancy and other conservation organizations

Amphibolite is a very dark rock usually resulting from uplifting and folding geologic processes, and it yields a rich soil that often supports rare plant species. We believe the mountain to be

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

# LOWER HAW SNA GROWING AGAIN

A wide-ranging partnership and contributions from two of the state's conservation trust funds has resulted in 82 acres of woodlands near Bynum in Chatham County being added to the Lower Haw River State Natural Area.

The addition provides a bookend to a 40-acre tract on the river's opposite bank that was added earlier this year. The lead partner in both acquisitions was the Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC).

"Where water quality, wildlife habitat and recreational opportunity come together, it can't get any better than that," the conservancy's executive director Kevin Brice said at an informal November ceremony on the riverbank. "This is just the perfect conservation effort."

The state natural area was created in 2003 when TLC partnered with the state to buy more than 1,000 acres along the Haw between Bynum and US 64 from Duke University. The state natural area protects roughly four miles of shoreline on the river that empties into Jordan Lake.

State parks staff at the Jordan Lake State Recreation Area manages the area.

For the latest acquisition, TLC secured \$750,000 in funding from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, and \$450,000 from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund was channeled through the state parks system.

The deal also involved help from the landowner Eleanor Smith Pegg, the N.C. Botanical Garden Foundation at UNC-Chapel Hill and the Haw River Assembly.

In 2004, Pegg donated the property to the botanical garden. Its foundation was instructed



*Greg Schneider, superintendent of Jordan Lake State Recreation Area, speaks at an informal ceremony on the Haw River.*

to sell the land and use the proceeds for a new visitor center in Chapel Hill and for scholarships.

The Botanical Garden Foundation agreed to wait for TLC to pull together state funding for the project, which took more than two years, in order to honor Pegg's desire to keep the land in conservation.

The property is considered a gateway onto the river from the Bynum community and has been popular with anglers, canoeists and kayakers for years as a handy access point on US 15-501.

The property offers gentle slopes with mixed hardwood forest and protects about 2,000 feet of river frontage on the Haw. And, it provides another 3,400 feet of buffer along two small tributaries. The Town of Pittsboro's drinking water intake is directly across the river.

The river is home to at least two endangered species: a fish, the Cape Fear shiner, and Septima's clubtail dragonfly.

The Haw River in this area has been identified as a nationally significant aquatic habitat and the riparian lands are designated as a natural area of state significance. Both designations relate to providing habitat for rare native plants and animals.

In the past three years, the conservancy has negotiated on behalf of the state to add land to the state natural area. This is the second such project to be completed.

Triangle Land Conservancy's 64 protected sites in Wake, Durham, Orange, Chatham, Johnston and Lee counties encompass more than 8,800 acres including several preserves open to visitors year-round.

## MOUNT JEFFERSON

*CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12*

about 300 million years old and it may have once stood about 15,000 feet high.

In 1975, the park was recognized as being a National Natural Landmark – a place of natural resource value for the entire country. A few surviving American chestnut trees were discovered on the mountain about that time alongside orchids, big tooth aspen and hemlocks.

We are very proud and thankful today as we remember those forward-looking citizens who began the process of conserving this important cultural and natural resource for our children and future generations.



*At right, Hammocks Beach State Park staff poses with the mountain of toys collected during the cruise season. Above, one of the park's ferries is decorated with lights for Christmas.*



## CRUISES BRING KNOWLEDGE...AND TOYS

In early September the Hammocks Beach State Park staff was seclused in the conference room with Superintendent Paul Donnelly, planning a work schedule for a series of special events.

Remarkably, the staff was actually volunteering and competing to be scheduled to work this detail.

Even though the September sun was still blistering hot, the staff was thinking about Christmas – not about who would be off for the holidays, but who would get the privilege to work the Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Marsh Cruises.

The interpretive boat rides through the outstanding resource marsh waters behind Bear Island, were available to the general public for the price of a new, unwrapped toy.

With the schedule set, the staff went about like elves to make sure the series was a success. Ranger Sarah Bouknight developed an eye-catching poster that was plastered all over town, and Ranger Justin Barnes made his television debut as a spokesperson on the local cable channel.

Office assistant Karen Ulrich prepared sign-up sheets

and office assistant Mary Carr decorated a large box to collect the toys in the visitor center lobby. Maintenance mechanics Darren Fulcher and Eddie Rich prepared one of the ferry boats for extended service.

Literally within hours of the first publicity, phone calls began to pour in for reservations for cruises that offered the opportunity to learn about the estuarine ecosystem, the value of clean water and local history.

Each trip would have one of the “killer B’s” -- rangers Barnes, Bouknight, Sam Bland and Kevin Bleck – as an interpreter. The ferry would first cruise the Intracoastal Waterway past the Swansboro waterfront and to Huggins Island. Here the passengers would learn about Fort Huggins, painted buntings and Native Americans.

The cruise would then continue through the extensive marsh behind Bear Island with focus shifting to wading birds, barrier islands and Bear Island history.

After the first few marsh cruises, word spread quickly and reservations for November began to swell. This made Mary realize a bigger box – no, boxes

– would be needed. Mary, whose enthusiasm for Christmas is rivaled only by Santa himself, was off to find boxes at the local furniture store.

The park’s display of toys was growing rapidly and in need of security. To ensure that the toys were safe, Camp Lejeune Toys for Tots coordinator Staff Sgt. Monica Feil dispatched two marines in full dress blues to stand guard over the toys prior to the departure of the cruises.

Word of our good deeds reached the highest level within the Toys For Tots Foundation with a visit from the director, Kevin Doyle, colonel, USMC (Ret.).

With a true team effort, the park staff conducted 22 marsh cruises with 478 participants. This resulted in great generosity from the participants with more than 500 toys collected.

(However a few of the toys may not technically be “new” as Ranger Barnes did his best Lance Armstrong impersonation riding a bike through the visitor center on more than one occasion. And even Donnelly was caught banging out a few tunes on the toy keyboard.)



# North Carolina State Parks

## Monthly Attendance Report

### October, 2006

| PARK                    | OCTOBER<br>2006 | TOTAL YTD.<br>OCT. 2006 | OCTOBER<br>2005 | TOTAL YTD<br>OCT. 2005 | % CHANGE<br>(2005/2006)<br>OCT. | YTD        |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| Carolina Beach          | 21,478          | 221,120                 | 20,602          | 215,883                | 4%                              | 2%         |
| Cliffs of the Neuse     | 13,377          | 104,626                 | 6,324           | 84,582                 | 112%                            | 24%        |
| Crowder's Mountain      | 23,951          | 299,222                 | 31,188          | 294,273                | -23%                            | 2%         |
| Dismal Swamp            | 2,868           |                         |                 |                        |                                 |            |
| Eno River               | 24,041          | 271,069                 | 24,874          | 276,400                | -3%                             | -2%        |
| Falls Lake              | 42,316          | 899,713                 | 40,391          | 835,752                | 5%                              | 8%         |
| Fort Fisher             | 45,822          | 607,383                 | 47,419          | 586,650                | -3%                             | 4%         |
| Fort Macon              | 75,378          | 1,111,208               | 83,070          | 1,103,206              | -9%                             | 1%         |
| Goose Creek             | 8,473           | 91,890                  | 10,076          | 121,371                | -16%                            | -24%       |
| Gorges                  | 10,494          | 102,833                 | 5,796           | 103,851                | 81%                             | -1%        |
| Hammocks Beach          | 7,941           | 112,221                 | 7,995           | 121,611                | -1%                             | -8%        |
| Hanging Rock            | 30,913          | 368,358                 | 37,022          | 341,587                | -17%                            | 8%         |
| Haw River State Park    |                 |                         |                 |                        |                                 |            |
| Jockey's Ridge          | 63,433          | 938,296                 | 53,058          | 902,068                | 20%                             | 4%         |
| Jones Lake              | 3,436           | 59,869                  | 4,243           | 70,648                 | -19%                            | -15%       |
| Jordan Lake             | 51,702          | 924,274                 | 57,618          | 1,407,763              | -10%                            | -34%       |
| Kerr Lake               | 61,472          | 1,106,700               | 87,236          | 1,541,680              | -30%                            | -28%       |
| Lake James              | 9,385           | 634,860                 | 20,838          | 355,001                | -55%                            | 79%        |
| Lake Norman             | 21,531          | 409,086                 | 30,570          | 419,664                | -30%                            | -3%        |
| Lake Waccamaw           | 5,588           | 85,490                  | 5,080           | 76,490                 | 10%                             | 12%        |
| Lumber River            | 8,344           | 70,338                  | 6,845           | 55,919                 | 22%                             | 26%        |
| Medoc Mountain          | 4,724           | 47,444                  | 5,076           | 42,732                 | -7%                             | 11%        |
| Merchant's Millpond     | 17,812          | 163,165                 | 16,824          | 195,136                | 6%                              | -16%       |
| Morrow Mountain         | 34,660          | 313,582                 | 16,280          | 183,400                | 113%                            | 71%        |
| Mount Jefferson         | 12,007          | 77,503                  | 7,592           | 69,687                 | 58%                             | 11%        |
| Mount Mitchell          | 64,210          | 276,404                 | 45,149          | 218,243                | 42%                             | 27%        |
| New River               | 12,977          | 198,117                 | 10,794          | 126,754                | 20%                             | 56%        |
| Occoneechee Mountain    | 4,396           | 48,240                  | 4,319           | 44,800                 | 2%                              | 8%         |
| Pettigrew               | 5,304           | 65,762                  | 4,440           | 64,003                 | 19%                             | 3%         |
| Pilot Mountain          | 51,900          | 345,895                 | 40,849          | 343,733                | 27%                             | 1%         |
| Raven Rock              | 8,783           | 84,620                  | 9,785           | 92,318                 | -10%                            | -8%        |
| Singletary Lake         | 2,724           | 31,790                  | 2,700           | 37,676                 | 1%                              | -16%       |
| South Mountains         | 18,190          | 180,164                 | 15,560          | 170,622                | 17%                             | 6%         |
| Stone Mountain          | 45,952          | 365,652                 | 37,816          | 334,876                | 22%                             | 9%         |
| Weymouth Woods          | 3,468           | 37,889                  | 3,478           | 36,211                 | 0%                              | 5%         |
| William B. Umstead      | 51,446          | 521,958                 | 51,761          | 508,344                | -1%                             | 3%         |
| <b>SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL</b> | <b>870,496</b>  | <b>11,176,741</b>       | <b>852,668</b>  | <b>11,382,934</b>      | <b>2%</b>                       | <b>-2%</b> |



## ***Our Mission Remains...***

to protect North Carolina's **natural diversity**;  
to provide and promote **outdoor recreation**  
opportunities throughout North Carolina;  
to exemplify and encourage **good stewardship**  
of North Carolina's natural resources for all  
citizens and visitors.

*8,000 copies of this public document were printed  
at a cost of \$554.90 or \$0.069 per copy.*

## ***SAFETY ZONE***

### **GET IN GEAR WITH SAFETY**

- ✓ Use personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate for the specific hazards of the task at hand.
- ✓ Inspect protective equipment carefully before each use to ensure it's in good condition.
- ✓ Wear hearing protection in noisy environments. Sound does not have to be painful to be harmful.
- ✓ Never take chances, even while wearing or using protective equipment.

*The Steward*  
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